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## STUDY XXXVI.—COURSE AND CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF THE CHRIST.

## I. Introductory.

1. It will be profitable now to look back over what has been done in Studies I.-III. The student has now obtained a knowledge of the geographical and physical characteristics of the land in which the Christ lived, as well as of the history and the (then) present condition of the people among whom he labored. He has, also, learned with some degree of clearness the various ideas about the expected Christ held by the various classes of the people. He has carefully examined the records of the life of the Christ to ascertain their characteristics, their relations, their origin, trustworthiness, etc. Thus a background has been created, a preparation made, for the consideration of the chief subject of these studies, the life and work of the Christ himself.
2. The following Studies will develop this subject. The present one will take up the life of the Christ from without, from the external stand-point, to place him in the midst of these surroundings, to trace his outward life passed among them, to note the various events that characterized that life from the beginning to the end.
3. The only authorities for our study here are the Gospels. In regard to them it is to be noted 1) they do not pretend to give us all the events of the Christ's life, 2) they do not relate them always in chronological order, 3) their statements are sometimes not in harmony with one another and the information necessary to harmonize them is not in possession of the student, 4) yet, after all, an intelligible and tolerably complete account can be gathered of this life the significance of which is found not in the fullness with which its chronological or historical course is grasped, but in its spiritual and divine relations as these are revealed and developed in human life and earthly conditions.

## II. The Course of the Life.

1. Recall the statement of material contained in each of the Gospels (cf. Study XXXV., I., 1, 1)-4)) and from them all form a complete general outline of the life of the Christ. The following topics are suggested, but let the student exercise his own judgment and substitute others if preferable: 1) *The birth of Jesus*; 2) *his early life*; 3) *preparation for public ministry*; 4) *early ministry*; 5) *galilean ministry*; 6) *journey toward Jerusalem*; 7) *last days*; 8) *resurrection*.
2. It will, now, be best to take up some of the larger divisions in the general outline and seek to divide them into smaller sections; e. g.,
  - 1) THE GALILEAN MINISTRY: several points of division might be selected; the following are suggested for testing and approval by the student: (a) from the beginning to the event of Mk. 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-19 (Mt. 10:2-4)—*the choosing of the Twelve*; (b) thence to the event of Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; John 6:1-14—*feeding of the five thousand*; (c) thence to Mt. 19:1,2; Mk. 10:1; Lk. 9:51-56—*departure from Galilee*.
  - 2) JOURNEY TOWARD JERUSALEM: (a) to the discourse of Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34; Lk. 18:31-34—*the approaching doom*; (b) to the event of Mt. 21:1; Mk. 11:1; Lk. 19:29; John 12:12—*the entry into Jerusalem*.

[Topic 7) may be similarly treated by dividing it according to days.]
3. Now take slips of paper and write at the head of each slip one of these general topics or their divisions. Then consult the passages in the Gospels which narrate the events of this period, and as you read note down in a single word or a brief phrase each event in its order;<sup>1</sup> e. g.,

<sup>1</sup> In making up these lists 1) do not be solicitous to put the particular events in their exact order, but 2) take some one Gospel, e. g. Mark, as a basis for arrangement and insert the events of the other Gospels where they seem to belong. Consult a Harmony if possible, but do not feel bound always to yield to its authority.

- 1) **THE BIRTH OF JESUS** (Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:5-2:7): (a) *birth of John the Baptist announced* (Lk. 1:5-25); (b) *birth of Jesus announced* (Lk. 1:26-38); (c) *Mary visits Elizabeth* (Lk. 1:39-56); (d) *birth of John* (Lk. 1:57-80); (e) *birth of Jesus* (Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 2:1-7).
- 2) **HIS EARLY LIFE** (Mt. 2:1-23; Lk. 2:8-52): (a) *tidings to the shepherds* (Lk. 2:8-20); (b) *circumcision and presentation* (Lk. 2:21-38); (c) *visit of the magi* (Mt. 2:1-12); (d) *flight into Egypt* (Mt. 2:13-23); (e) *at Nazareth* (Mt. 2:23; Lk. 2:39,40); (f) *visit to Jerusalem* (Lk. 2:41,51); (g) *at Nazareth again* (Lk. 2:51,52). [The other topics may be similarly treated.]
4. When this work is completed you will have a systematized list of over one hundred events in the life of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Exercise yourself in this list until you have mastered its main outlines and particular sections so as to think through the course of the life from beginning to end.

### III. The Chronology of the Life.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Preliminary Remarks.* It would be very desirable to establish some chronological data with which to connect the facts of the life of Jesus. But the Gospels contain no system of chronology and the uncertain data which can be gained depend upon doubtful inferences from passages not directly concerned with chronology. The endeavor here will be to obtain approximate dates for the following events: 1) the date of the death of Jesus; 2) the date of his birth; 3) the length of his ministry.
2. *The data from which to determine these dates are as follows:* 1) the number of passovers mentioned in the Gospels, each being a year apart; cf. John 2:13; 6:4; 13:1 (note John 5:1 as possibly another passover<sup>3</sup>); 2) Mk. 15:42, fixing Friday as the day of his death; 3) Ex. 12:6, fixing the passover day on the 15th of the month; 4) John 2:20, taken in connection with Herod's beginning the temple in B. C. 19; 5) Lk. 3:23.
3. *The date of Jesus' death.* 1) Taking together 2) and 3) above, it is calculated that Friday fell on the 14th or 15th<sup>4</sup> (Nisan) in the years 30 A. D. or 33 A. D.; 2) but the datum of 4) above, yields the year 28 A. D. as the date of the first passover (John 2:13) and the third passover would be A. D. 30; 3) hence the conclusion that Jesus was crucified on the 14th or 15th (Nisan), A. D. 30.
4. *The length of the ministry.* 1) The number of passovers would give at least two years for the ministry, A. D. 28-30; 2) but his ministry had already begun, cf. John 1:29-2:12; 3) hence his baptism is, approximately, in the latter part of A. D. 27 or the beginning of A. D. 28.
5. *The date of his birth.* 1) Lk. 3:23 in connection with the previously established date, A. D. 27-28, would yield B. C. 2 as about the date of his birth; 2) this conclusion agrees with calculations from Mt. 2:1,2,19.
6. *The principal dates in the life of Jesus are, therefore, about as follows:* 1) birth, B. C. 2; 2) baptism, A. D. 27-28; 3) public ministry, A. D. 28-30; 4) death, Friday, Nisan 14-15, A. D. 30.
7. The student may now organize the ministry of Jesus about these dates according to the minor chronological hints given in the gospels.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare such an outline in Lindsay's *Mark*, pp. 35-39.

<sup>2</sup> The best discussion of these points will be found in Andrews' *Life of Our Lord*, where, however, John 5:1 is taken as a passover, and the dates are, therefore, different by a year from those given here.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. in favor of this, Andrews, pp. 171-180; against, Godet on John, I., pp. 452,453.

<sup>4</sup> On the alleged discrepancy between the Synoptists and John, see Andrews, pp. 425-460; Weiss' *Life of Christ*, III., pp. 273-282.

<sup>5</sup> An excellent chronological resumé of the ministry of Jesus is given in Stapfer, pp. 477-487.